

# VIRGINIA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

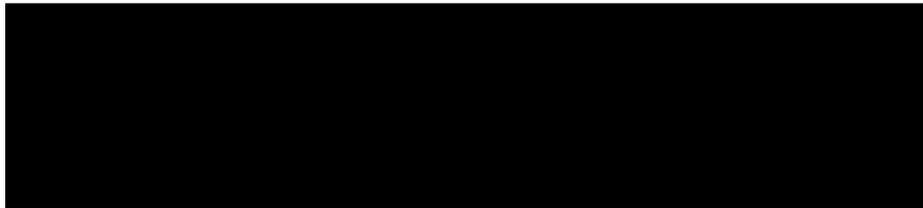


WGSS: YEMEN CIVIL WAR,  
HADI GOVERNMENT

Chair: Devansh Agarwal  
Crisis Director: Nick Mortensen

# Hadi Defense Contingency Manual

For immediate release to high military and civil  
authorities



TOP SECRET - DO NOT PHOTOCOPY

Delegates,

Welcome to VAMUN! We are both incredibly excited to host you at UVA, and look forward to seeing how you approach some very difficult situations.

Before going any further, you will notice that this is a very military-heavy crisis. Every committee has some powerful military assets at their disposal, and ultimately has the goal of resolving the Yemeni Civil War in a way that is beneficial to their interests. That being said, military measures are *not* the only solution. Success in the committee room will require accomplishing civil and humanitarian objectives as well as military ones. At the moment, Yemen is a deeply fractured society that lacks the economic and social resources to construct a stable society. While military operations will be a large part of this committee, it is important to remember opportunities for a better life generally are not created at gunpoint.

There are five other groups to compete and cooperate with in this simulation. Some other committees pose an existential threat, while others could be a useful ally. Regardless of every group's alignment, realize you *cannot* succeed on your own. You will need the support of other committees to accomplish your goals, be they military or humanitarian. Keep this in mind as you write your directives and utilize your portfolio powers, since every action you take - unilateral or not - could potentially alienate or assist other committees.

Finally, comically unrealistic power plays will not be tolerated. There are no committees to defect to, diseases to engineer, or super soldiers to raise. Any delegate's attempt to undermine the realism of the simulation will be outright rejected, and such attempts will hurt their standing when the time comes to determine awards.

We look forward to meeting you,

Nicholas Mortensen (nm4cm@virginia.edu)

Devansh Agarwal (da3bc@virginia.edu)

## **Committee Details:**

While this committee will be interacting with a number of other crisis committees, our internal dynamics will be the same as other crises you may have participated in. Directives will serve as committee-wide actions endorsed and supported by a majority of the committee. Crisis notes will allow each delegate to use the individual “portfolio powers” possessed by their character. Portfolio powers are authorities and powers that a character would realistically possess. For example, a military general would be able to use their portfolio powers to begin a military operation, while a foreign minister would be able to communicate with other nations. What makes this committee unique is that every action will elicit reactions from other delegates from other committees, rather than from our crisis staffers. While this system forces you to consider the potential consequences across five other committees, events will proceed dynamically and organically. What you want matters a lot less than what crisis may want.

Remember that every delegate who wishes to be considered for awards **must** bring in a position paper at the start of the first committee session. Also understand that the quality of the position paper will play a significant role in determining awards. Even if you do not want to create a position paper, *please do your due diligence while researching*. The Yemeni civil war is an incredibly complex conflict, and any attempt to improvise without a basic understanding of the conflict’s dynamics is very likely to backfire on both yourself, and the committee at large.

Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you have any questions about the committee, or the simulation at large.

## **Committee Overview:**

The situation is grim. Our forces have been pushed into Yemen's southern reaches, and the Houthi rebels now threaten our capital of Aden. To the East, several terrorist groups have taken advantage of the chaos to establish a presence in our country. Abroad, several powers are deliberating about the faith of our nation. Some may wish to help us, others want to crush us. None of them have our best interests at heart. We will be on our own to begin, and those in charge of the military *must* take decisive action to stabilize the situation. Aden cannot fall.

Once Aden's continued safety is guaranteed, we will be able to focus on the bigger picture. This committee has three ultimate goals: Defeat the Houthi Rebels, establish and reinforce a unified national government run by President Hadi, and maintain Yemen's sovereignty from the other powers involved in the Yemeni Civil War.

These goals may seem simple at first, but we have grown up learning that nothing is truly that easy in Yemen. The Houthi Rebels are deeply entrenched in a number of urban centers and are receiving aggressive support from Iran. The population centers loyal to us have been ravaged by food shortages, disease outbreaks, missile strikes, and snipers. We have grown increasingly reliant on military and economic support from international coalitions that are richer, stronger, and far more influential than ourselves.

While fostering national unity is a noble goal, we have quickly found that every region of Yemen has a distinct culture and history that makes it seemingly incompatible with other regions. A history of Ottoman occupation, British colonialism, and the Cold War divisions have undermined national unity, and will present a significant challenge in our battle for Yemen's future.

To accomplish the goals put forward to us by President Hadi, we must accomplish military victories as well as civic victories. All the military efforts and successes in the world will ultimately be useless if we are unable to reconcile our people's differences. Economic inequalities endured by the south must be rectified, while the tribal power structure in the Northern highlands must either be neutralized or integrated into the national order. Failure to accomplish these goals will simply guarantee another civil war later in the future.

While international aid and military support will be seductive, it is incredibly dangerous. Reliance on economic aid will put us at the mercy of nations that provide it, as will a reliance on military aid, especially if we allow foreign troops stationed in Yemen to grow more powerful than our own.

Likewise, we must avoid taking any actions that will stoke the ire of the international community. Continued humanitarian crises, atrocities committed by the military, or repeated military failures will embolden our enemies and alienate our allies. While we must be careful when accepting international aid, we must also understand that we cannot win this conflict on our own. Driving another nation to directly intervene against us in will be just as damaging as enslaving ourselves to international powers.

Brothers, we will soon find ourselves performing in one of the most complicated balancing acts in the Middle East. Success in one area will mean nothing if we falter elsewhere. This means that our military personnel will be equally as important as those of you in the civil service. While ultimate decision-making capability will rest with President Hadi, we will otherwise be a committee of equals. Do not let anyone convince you that your role is irrelevant, or that your goals for the nation do not matter. We will be as strong as our weakest link.

## **Background:**

President Hadi wants nothing left to chance. He has requested that every single one of us review the following information and take it to heart. Included is an account of Yemeni history that explains the regionalism and social divisions we are currently grappling with. Additionally, this document includes general information about the Yemeni Civil War, and pertinent economic, social, demographic, and military information. Regardless of what you may be doing, make sure you have read and understood everything that we have included. Our intelligence services went to great lengths to secure this information, mistakes caused by simple ignorance could cost us dearly.

## **“A Tale of Two Yemens” - Yemen’s North / South Divide:**

For our purposes, we can consider the histories of northern and southern Yemen to be distinct until roughly 1960. Ottoman occupation, British colonialism, and Cold War tensions, and interference from other Arab States kept the affairs and governance of the two regions separate until the middle of the 20th century, when decolonization and the rise of the Middle East in global affairs led to more substantive interactions between the two regions. Before considering Yemen’s history from 1960 onward, it is important to understand the history of both regions leading up to that point.

## **Northern Yemen Prior to 1970**

The tribes of Yemen’s northern highlands have held much of the political and military power throughout the country’s history. Attempts by the British and Ottoman empires to expand into this northern region were usually short-lived, or failed outright. The northern tribes

practiced Zaydi Islam, a Shi'ite sect that believed that only a descendant of the prophet Muhammed was fit to lead as an Imam. These tribes unified under the Yemeni Imamate, which by 1926 controlled the entirety of Northern Yemen.<sup>1</sup> While northern Yemeni's aspired to regain control of the port city of Aden, it - and much of southern Yemen - remained under the control of the British empire until the mid 20th century.<sup>2</sup>

While the Imamate enjoyed extensive power, it relied on the support of northern tribal leaders, known as Sheikhs, to maintain its hold on power. An Imam served at the pleasure of these Sheikhs, and would be killed if they failed to maintain their support. While the foundation of the Imamate's power never changed, it became less isolationist and adopted more modern forms of governance as time went on. By 1950, Northern Yemen began to accept aid from the Soviet Union, but remained a conservative, ideologically insular state. This changed in the 1960's, when a contingent of military officers influenced by Arab nationalist sentiment and bolstered by Egyptian military support staged successful a coup against the Imamate. In 1968, Northern Yemen abandoned its long-held Islamic system of leadership, and became the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR)<sup>3</sup>. While the Zaydi system of governance was removed, the political realities of northern Yemen remained unchanged. The Sheikhs who empowered the Imamate came to hold significant positions of power within the new government.

### **Southern Yemen Prior to 1970**

While the southern portion of Yemen has lacked the political and military clout of the northern highlands, it makes up for this imbalance by possessing much of the country's natural resources, arable land, and the critically important coastal trade city of Aden. Unfortunately,

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Clark, *Yemen*, (Yale University Press: 2010), 45

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, (Cambridge University Press: 2012), 38

<sup>3</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 95

these assets made southern Yemen a particularly attractive target for colonization. The Ottoman empire occupied much of Yemen in the 16th century, and returned again in the 19th century to check British expansion into the region.<sup>4</sup> While the Ottomans never fared particularly well against the northern tribes, they had greater success buying the loyalty of Yemen's southern tribes. Sultans - who played the same role in the tribal hierarchy as the North's Sheikhs - that tolerated the Ottoman presence were given generous stipends and various material gifts for their trouble<sup>5</sup>. Though the Ottomans dabbled in Yemen for centuries, their empire quickly collapsed and vanished after their defeat in WWI.

Southern Yemen also spent a great deal of time under British colonial rule. While the English did not particularly covet Yemen, they viewed Aden as a useful port for both trade, and for refueling trade ships bound for India<sup>6</sup>. The city was claimed by the British after a brief display of overwhelming military superiority, and the Sultans again found themselves trading their sovereignty for money and materials.<sup>7</sup> Over time, the Aden protectorate was formed as more southern tribes were bought out by the British, and the territory gradually took up both the southern and eastern parts of modern Yemen.

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<sup>4</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 23

<sup>5</sup>Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 34

<sup>6</sup>Clark, *Yemen*, 56

<sup>7</sup>Clark, *Yemen*, 57



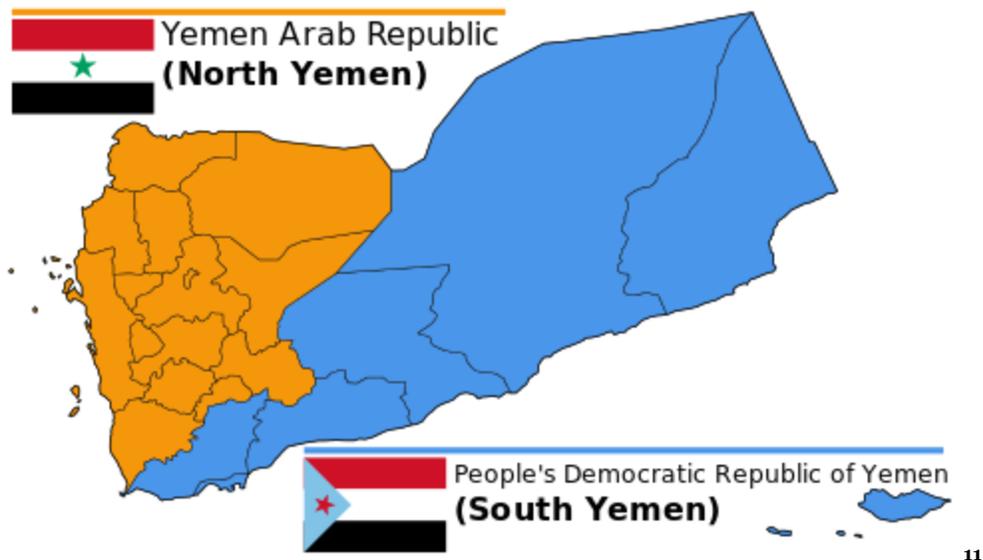
British rule of the Aden protectorate continued relatively uneventfully until the 1960's, when rising Arab nationalist agitation from Egypt and the Muslim brotherhood led to rising discontent within Aden and the tribes surrounding it. Workers began expressing anger over pay, working conditions, and their relegation to second-class status under their colonial rulers.<sup>9</sup> Tribes were seduced by idealistic promises of Yemeni self-determination. Though the British initially promised to keep their holdings in Aden, they ultimately pushed turning the Aden protectorate into a quasi-independent state, the Federation of South Arabia in 1963.<sup>10</sup> This nation was promptly abandoned by the British, and taken over by radical marxist elements in December of 1970. After only seven years, the Federation of South Arabia was transformed into the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

<sup>8</sup> World Digital Library - *Aden Protectorate*

<sup>9</sup> Clark, *Yemen* 86

<sup>10</sup> Clark, *Yemen* 90

## The Two Yemeni States, 1970-1990



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Relations between the PRDY and YAR could charitably be described as inconsistent. While rhetoric on both sides championed the lofty goal of unification, the two nations cycled between periods of distrust, rapprochement, and intermittent violence<sup>12</sup>. Like the other divided nations of the Cold War, reunification would not come easily.

The PRDY progressed much like other communist states during the Cold War. The fledgling nation quickly gained the support of the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern Bloc, and went about consolidating political power and undoing the so-called “injustices” condemned by the marxism. The political tribalism was undercut through various purges and efforts from a secret police force trained by the infamous *Stasi*, East Germany’s secret police force and arguably one of the most effective in recorded history. Women enjoyed modest progress as they were allowed to both go to school, and were no longer expected to wear the coverings common in more conservative Islamic societies<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Map Taken from Harvard International Review

<sup>12</sup> Library of Congress - Federal Research Division, *Yemen Profile*, (Library of Congress: 2008), 3-4

<sup>13</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 134

While the PRDY accomplished many of its social and political goals, attaining true economic prosperity remained a challenge. Aden had been a massive economic asset under British control, but was not able to attract significant traffic under socialist rule. To make matters worse, the economies of the world were not impressed by what few natural resources the PRDY possessed. While modest oil reserves were discovered in the later part of 1980<sup>14</sup>, southern Yemen simply did not have enough to compete economically.

The northern YAR fared no better. While the newly minted democracy made attempts to create a more inclusive system free of Zaydi domination, its attempts were in vain. Much like the southern PRDY, the YAR lacked the economic resources at home to secure any measure of prosperity or progress. Zaydi Sheikhs - who had grown accustomed centuries of political domination - swiftly centralized their power in the political and military spheres of the YAR<sup>15</sup>. Every Prime Minister that replaced the previous one found himself working in an institution that was increasingly dismissive of their power. Some Prime Ministers only lasted a few months, resigning or being forced out due to failures to secure substantial change, or simply out of embarrassment<sup>16</sup>. While the YAR sold itself as a gleaming beacon of Arab democracy, it quickly became clear that the Imamate never truly went away.

While the two Yemen states had embraced completely different political and economic systems, they both shared many of the same woes. Neither nation was capable of using what few natural resources they possessed to turn any sort of profit, instead relying almost entirely on remittances sent back from Yemeni migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Clark, *Yemen* 145

<sup>15</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 102

<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 105

<sup>17</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 108

Massive loans and a complete reliance on foreign aid filled the fiscal gaps the remittances did not fill<sup>18</sup>.

Through the years of disappointments and hardships, unification continued to capture the hearts and minds of both Yemens. However, the realities of life in both nations presented a massive obstacle to those aspirations. The economic and political systems in both nations were thought to be incompatible, and a string of renewed border conflicts in the late 1970's only drove the two nations further apart. Many experts thought reunification would be decades away, if it ever came at all<sup>19</sup>.

And yet, reunification came.

## **Yemen's Reunification**

The unification of Yemen came quickly, unexpectedly, and above all else, poorly. Some experts have claimed Yemen's reunification was driven by the discovery of oil in southern Yemen in 1984<sup>20</sup>. Others believe that it may have simply been pushed to quell the outbreak of war between the two Yemens<sup>21</sup>. Regardless of the intentions of the political elites of both states, Yemen's reunification was a "shotgun wedding<sup>22</sup>," and neither side was ready for it.

Reunification led to the political collapse of southern Yemen as leaders unwilling to yield to the Zaydi-dominated north instead plunged the country into a short-lived civil war.<sup>23</sup> While the north was victorious, the united Yemen began its first months with a hobbled national unity and a great deal of uncertainty. While the south was promised equal representation in Yemen's new government, the Zaydis seized the majority of meaningful government posts, just as they

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<sup>18</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 212

<sup>19</sup> Dunbar, *The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics, and Prospects*, Middle East Journal 46(3), 456

<sup>20</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen* 113

<sup>21</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 114

<sup>22</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 150

<sup>23</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 162

did in the YAR<sup>24</sup>. Southern Yemen's tribes were slow to the political uptake after reunification, as years of repression from the PRDY had disrupted tribal culture in the region<sup>25</sup>.

Southern Yemen suffered greatly from reunification. The majority of resources, government positions, political representation, and land ended up in the hands of northern Yemenis. The economic situation in the South was further damaged by decisions made by the newly reunified government. Tensions in the south quickly began to flare and turn to violence, leading Yemen into its first civil war.

### **Outbreak of Yemen's First Civil War**

Yemen's first civil war was launched by the South on May 4th 1994, in response to perceived economic inequalities, corruption, and government dysfunction<sup>26</sup>. Southern Yemen's economic situation was an unintended consequence of President Saleh's decision to stand with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein after his invasion of Kuwait, much to the fury of the United States and many Gulf States<sup>27</sup>. Saudi Arabia quickly expelled over a million Yemenis who were working in the nation, cutting off a critical source of income for many of those who lacked economic opportunities in Yemen's southern half. The economic consequences of Saleh's decision compounded with political upheaval caused by the self-imposed exile of his vice-president, Ali Salim Al-Beidh in protest of the sluggish integration of Yemen's military and political systems<sup>28</sup>. Both sides quickly grew tired of each other, and tensions turned violent on May 4th, and neither side held back. Southern Yemen wished to secede from the national union that had not even lasted five years, while Northern Yemen fought to keep the country whole.

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<sup>24</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 165

<sup>25</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen* 120

<sup>26</sup> Hurd and Noakes, *North and South Yemen: Lead-up to Break-up*, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs: 1994,

<sup>27</sup> Farea Al-Muslimi, *A History of Missed Opportunities: Yemen and the GCC*, (Carnegie Middle East Center:2016).

<sup>28</sup> Hurd and Noakes, *North and South Yemen: Lead-up to Break-up*, 48

North and south Yemen retained their own militaries after reunification, and thus had access to missiles, aircraft, tanks, and artillery. These weapons were used to their fullest extent - often against civilian targets<sup>29</sup>. While both sides fought ferociously, northern Yemeni forces quickly pushed southward and besieged Aden.

The south was eventually forced to surrender, and was offered amnesty with the exception of 16 individuals<sup>30</sup>. While president Saleh's government offered a conciliatory tone, the civil war and its immediate aftermath held grave consequences for the people of Southern Yemen. The north refused to participate in any sort of cease-fire negotiations through the course of the civil war<sup>31</sup>, and there are allegations that northern military forces brutalized civilians during their siege and "liberation" of Aden at the end of the war<sup>32</sup>.

Regardless, the south had been forced back into unification, and little was done to alleviate the economic or social concerns that had led to civil war in the first place. Animosity in the south remained, and the supremacy of the north that had led to the conflict did not change at all.

## **Outbreak of Yemen's Second Civil War**

The collapse of peace in Yemen was caused by the intersection of a number of different events and uprisings. The two most pertinent being the spread of the "Arab Spring" demonstrations into Yemen, and militant groups in the north trying to reassert their own power.

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<sup>29</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 129

<sup>30</sup> Hurd and Noakes, *North and South Yemen: Lead-up to Break-up*.

<sup>31</sup> Hedges, *In Yemen's Civil War, South Fights on, Gloomily*, (The New York Times: 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 144

## **Yemen, the Arab Spring, and Hadi's Rise to Power**

While the Arab Spring plays less of a role in the current conflict before us, it was a major catalyst in our plunge into chaos. As with many other Arab states, citizens in Yemen demonstrated across the nation in 2011 against the acting head of state at the time, President Saleh. Protesters called for the president to step down, and for the government to begin a number of liberalizations and reforms within Yemen<sup>33</sup>. In Aden and in other areas, government forces responded with lethal force against demonstrators<sup>34</sup>.

The decision to fire on protesters severely weakened the government. The move drew international condemnation, and prompted promises of further resistance from protesters. Emboldened by government abuse, various rebel groups gained traction and began blocking major roads in Yemen's capital, Sanaa<sup>35</sup>.

Yemen's government is severely disrupted after President Saleh is injured in a rocket attack, and hands over power to his deputy: Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. After an uncontested election, Hadi is formally elected as president of Yemen and gets to work on reforming Yemen's constitution<sup>36</sup>. The conditions of Hadi's election, and his decision to undergo extensive government reforms proves to be unacceptable to Yemen's northern tribes.

Feeling increasingly alienated from Yemen's politics, the Houthis - a Zaydi tribe that former president Saleh belonged to - united other disgruntled tribes and marched on Yemen's capital and forced Hadi to resign. After this resignation, the Houthis dissolved Yemen's parliament and established the Supreme Revolutionary Committee as the new governing body of the country.

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<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch - Days of Bloodshed in Aden

<sup>34</sup> UN Security Council - Resolution 2014

<sup>35</sup> *Protesting Yemen Rebels Reject Government Overture*, (World Affairs Journal: 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Brian Perkins, *The Risks of Forgetting Yemen's Southern Secessionist Movement*, (War on the Rocks 2017).

Fearing for his life and the future of Yemen, Hadi and many other government officials managed to slip out of Sanaa and establish a provisional capital in the southern city of Aden. In an address to the nation, Hadi declared that the Supreme Revolutionary Committee was an illegitimate body, and called for them to be ejected from Sanaa. In response, the Houthis declared that Hadi and his supporters in Aden needed to be eliminated. A military campaign swiftly began, and the Houthis began a southward offensive. While military forces loyal to Hadi have fought courageously, they have been steadily pushed back towards Aden by Houthi fighters and pro-Houthi military forces.

Like many other Middle Eastern states, the Arab Spring was an event that brought about the collapse of the traditional government and immense social and military upheaval. While Saleh did order military forces to fire upon civilians, the Houthis do not particularly care. Hadi's rise to power as president was seen as an attack on their place in Yemen's politics, and they have responded in defense of their interests.

## **The Houthi Rebels**

The Houthi Rebels are composed of Zaydi tribesmen who grew discontent with President Hadi's leadership. After President Hadi's rise to power, the Houthis staged a number of protests in Sanaa which eventually transformed into an open rebellion against Yemen's existing government<sup>37</sup>. The Houthi Rebels took complete control of Sanaa in September of 2014 and called for President Hadi's removal from power. When Hadi fled south to Aden, the rebels followed, actively engaging forces still loyal to the Hadi Government<sup>38</sup>.

While Sanaa is no longer a seat of power for the Hadi Government, Aden has become a temporary capital of sorts for the Hadis. Numerous Gulf States have moved their embassies into

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<sup>37</sup> Perkins, *The Risks of Forgetting Yemen's Southern Secessionist Movement*

<sup>38</sup> *Yemen's Houthis Advance Closer to Aden*, (World Affairs Journal: 2015).

the port city, and the Houthis have thus far been unable to make significant gains in or around Aden. This relative position of security is not guaranteed to last. Houthi forces have begun mobilizing towards Aden, and are poised to take the city if our armed forces falter, or if we fail to secure the support of outside actors.

Those among you who believe the solutions to our problems will be simple, or that our history can be glossed over are doomed to fail and drag everyone else down around you. While President Hadi understands you are all professionals, he also expects a degree of historical competence. Consider what you have read to be the absolute baseline for your operations and efforts going forward. Further study of our history can only help you going forward, but what you have read here should be enough to stop you from making blunders that will be immediately lethal.

## **Analysis**

While our history is important, it is only one aspect of a much larger game. Attached is a variety of intelligence reports on a number of subjects, from information about our military to assessments of the other nations involved in this civil war. It is critical you read and fully understand all of these reports. Again, consider these a baseline. Our intelligence services expect you to expand your knowledge beyond what is seen below.

And some advice from me personally: Never, ever underestimate what you can do with a significant quantity of Khat.

## **The Stakes of the Civil War**

Yemen's civil war is both a power struggle and a sort of lashing out for many. While we have already discussed the relevant history for both ourselves and the Houthis, our intelligence

services want to make completely sure that you understand *why* this war is being waged. While your personal stakes may be different from those of the Hadi government, you will see to it that you understand both.

### **Hadi Motives**

The Hadi government is fighting to secure the future of the democratically elected government that was chosen by former president Saleh to succeed his multi-decade rule. The collapse of the Hadi government would endanger our positions in Yemen, as well as the safety of our families, friends, and associates. This is not a simple political spat. This is an existential conflict.

Our involvement in our war is also a matter of justice. The Houthis march against us in an attempt to reassert a centuries-long political system that excludes and marginalizes those who do not come from the Northern Highlands. Yemen's southern regions have lived in economic and political squalor since reunification, and will continue to do so if the Hadi government falls.

While some of us may wish no part of it, our civil war is also a matter of extreme importance to the Arab peninsula and beyond. Iran hopes to secure a new ally by helping the Houthis rise to power, something that Saudi Arabia will flatly refuse to accept and may take drastic measures to prevent. If we falter, we run the risk of destabilizing not only our homeland, but the entire region.

### **Houthi Motives**

While the Houthis present an existential threat to us, presenting them as a faceless, mindless force of evil is foolish. They are not a mindless swarm, they are people with families to

fight for and objectives to accomplish. Understanding their motives will allow us to predict the decisions they make and fight against them more effectively.

Yemen's civil war is just as much an existential conflict for the Hadis as it is for us. Defeat will have grave consequences for their leaders, families, and tribes. If the Houthis are led to believe that defeat will lead to death, they are likely to fight more tenaciously and pursue more desperate measures.

While we are fighting for more equal political representation across Yemen, the Houthis are fighting to secure the future of a theologically-mandated hierarchy they believe Yemen needs to prosper. Recall that Salafism requires that Yemen's ruler both shares their faith, and has the full support of the Salafist tribes. The Hadi government possesses neither of these prerequisites, and is understandably seen as an illegitimate group and an affront to their closely-held religious convictions. This belief is not an arbitrary excuse to wage war either; recall that numerous insurrections have been waged by the Northern tribes since reunification for this very reason.

## **Geography**

Yemen is a nation whose geography - like many other things - varies significantly by region. Each geographic area will present different challenges and opportunities, and our military leaders would be wise to always understand what kind of terrain they will be operating within. Attached below is a general map of your homeland.



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## Northern Highlands

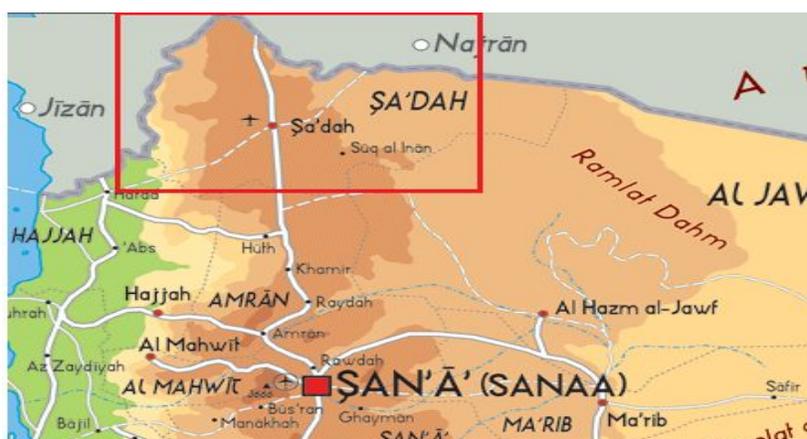
The northern region of Yemen's mountainous highlands are home to the bulk of Yemen's most powerful tribes, and the majority of the Houthi Rebels. The peaks found in the northern highlands are the highest in Yemen, and those living in the region are generally spared from the merciless heat commonplace in other parts of the country. Being the traditional home of much of Yemen's ruling tribal elite, tribal customs and culture still play an incredibly large role in everyday life within the region.<sup>40</sup> Anyone operating in the highlands must take care to respect these customs, or face grave consequences. The highland tribes have managed to beat back some

<sup>39</sup> Map provided by Wikimedia Commons

<sup>40</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 47

of the most powerful empires in human history due to both their military competence, and their mastery of terrain. No military engagement in this region should be taken lightly.

While the highlands are a region of incredible military and political importance, it lacks any significant agricultural capability or natural resource deposits. What little agriculture goes on in the region is directed towards growing Khat (see page XX), so those living in the northern highlands are reliant on other parts of the country for food<sup>41</sup>.



## Western Coast

Composed of the land between the Red Sea in the east and the mountains in the west, Yemen's western coast region experiences blistering heat and humidity and comparatively high rainfall<sup>42</sup>. The West coast is one of Yemen's most diverse regions; tribal customs hold far less influence here than in other regions, and centuries of African and European influences have given the region a unique identity<sup>43</sup>. While the Yemenis living on the west coast are not known for their martial prowess, their unique culture and dialect will present a slew of political challenges if we do not properly appreciate these differences.

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<sup>41</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 47.

<sup>42</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 48

<sup>43</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 50.

Due to its climate, the west coast contains a significant amount arable land, as well as bustling fishing and trade industries<sup>44</sup>. Dominating the region should be seen as a first step in weaning off our dependence on foreign aid.



## Western Midlands

The western midland region is composed of the lower mountains and valleys north of Aden, stopping just short of the northern highlands and west coast regions. The midlands contain Yemen's oldest mosque, and a distinct culture that is almost entirely free of the tribal influences experienced in other regions<sup>45</sup>. The climate is fairly mild in comparison to the sweltering heat experience on the west coast and eastern deserts<sup>46</sup>.

The Western midlands are one of the most strategically significant regions in Yemen. The mild climate and flat terrain house the majority of Yemen's agricultural capabilities, and also

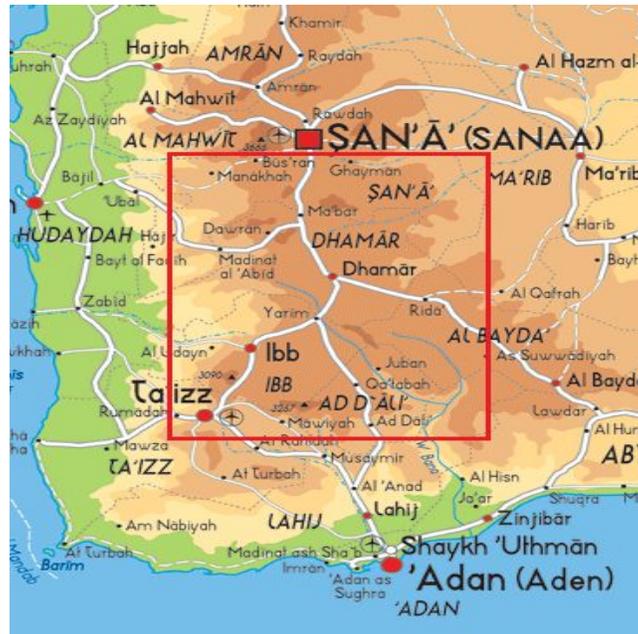
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<sup>44</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 50.

<sup>45</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 52.

<sup>46</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 54.

house much of Yemen's industrial capabilities<sup>47</sup>. Control of the region would be a massive economic coup, would act as an invaluable staging area for other operations across the nation due to its relatively centralized location.



## Southwest Lowlands

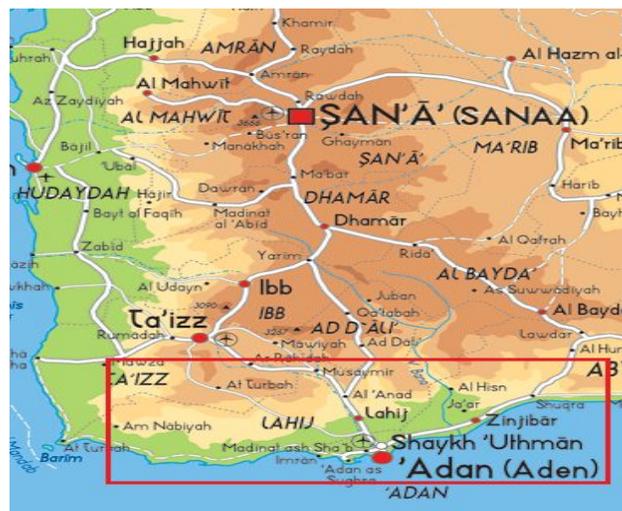
The southwest lowlands region is composed of the land between the midland's southern mountains and the gulf of Aden. This region can be considered our base of operations and capital. Aden remains loyal to the Hadi Government, and Aden's cosmopolitan and liberal tendencies put it at cultural odds with the Houthi Rebels<sup>48</sup>. While tribal bonds were weakened during the PRDY's reign, there has been a widespread revival of tribal traditions in the southwest lowlands since Yemen's unification<sup>49</sup>. While these tribes are strongly opposed to the Houthi Rebels, they will still expect their customs to be understood and respected.

<sup>47</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 54

<sup>48</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 58

<sup>49</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 156

The region is not fit for agriculture due to low soil quality and unreliable water sources. Trade and fishing are the lowland's most powerful assets. Aden is a port city possessing one of the best natural harbors in the world, and is situated to one of the most active naval trade routes in the world<sup>50</sup>. Aden should be viewed as our link to the rest of the world, and losing it would almost certainly lead to total defeat. Pushing back the Houthi from the Port of Aden must be seen as a crucial first step, and must be done no matter what the cost.



## Eastern Regions

Yemen's eastern regions include its deserts, and the relatively autonomous region known as "Hadramaut<sup>51</sup>." The bulk of Yemen's modest oil resources lie in the eastern deserts, and Hadramaut is known for its plentiful natural resources and traditions of shrewd investments in the rest of the Arabian Peninsula<sup>52</sup>. While both regions are highly desirable for economic reasons, they present a slew of challenges. The desert region is occupied by insular tribes that feel more of a connection to each other than the rest of Yemen, and the denizens of Hadramaut have enjoyed a degree of autonomy and independence from Yemen's broader affairs that will - at

<sup>50</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 51

<sup>51</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 52

<sup>52</sup> Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen*, 53.

best - make them feel ambivalent to our larger struggle<sup>53</sup>. Additionally, Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (APAP) has claimed a significant amount of territory in Yemen's eastern reaches. Any attempt to establish Hadi dominance in the region will be particularly difficult, but will also be quite rewarding.



## Agriculture

While Yemen has significant agriculture capabilities in comparison to other Arab states, the majority of that arable land is being used towards harvesting one plant: Khat<sup>54</sup>. The plant is an unassuming leafy shrub of sorts, and is also one of the most culturally significant plants in Yemen.

When chewed, Khat provides a strong kick of energy and is mildly euphoric<sup>55</sup>. Khat is a plant of extreme cultural importance. Afternoon “Khat chews” are a universal custom across Yemen, especially amongst leaders and tribal elites<sup>56</sup>. To be invited to a Khat chew is to be

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<sup>53</sup> Clark, *Yemen* 156

<sup>54</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 17

<sup>55</sup> Sikiru Lamina, *Khat (Catha edulis): The herb with officio-legal, socio-cultural and economic uncertainty* (South African Journal of Science: 2010)

<sup>56</sup> Clark, *Yemen* 36

invited into a person's inner circle, and no meaningful negotiation with any of Yemen's tribes will take place without a large amount of fresh Khat on offer<sup>57</sup>. A bundle of Khat will be a prerequisite for any negotiations.



## **Military**

At the moment, our military is neither fully modernized or self-sufficient. Like other militaries, Yemen maintains an army (YA), air force (YAF), border guard (YBG), and navy (YN)<sup>58</sup>. While these branches still do exist, every branch has leaned heavily on both foreign military powers and paramilitary groups within Yemen. The YAF lacks the logistical capability to wage a sustained air campaign, and will likely need international support to become an effective fighting force. The YA and YBG have been operating alongside HIRAK, a southern secessionist movement that - at the moment - prefers Hadi control over Houthi subjugation<sup>59</sup>. Yemen's Navy is small, but plays a critical role in preventing the Houthi's from receiving supplies from any

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<sup>57</sup> Clark, *Yemen*, 36

<sup>58</sup> *Yemen Order of Battle*, (Criticalthreats: 2015), <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/yemen-order-of-battle>

<sup>59</sup> Perkins, *The Risks of Forgetting Yemen's Southern Secessionist Movement*.

ports it may find itself in control of. That said, our naval forces do not operate alone. Western naval forces have been spotted around Yemen's waters in an attempt to stop arms smugglers<sup>60</sup>.

While the situation is somewhat stable at the moment, every branch of our military is using outdated equipment and is utterly reliant on fickle outside actors. The first priority of our military leaders should be to either secure the support they currently have, or establish their independence from these outside actors. Interacting with these outside actors is not optional. If we attempt to wage this war independently, we will be defeated.

Our researchers are still compiling information on specific troop numbers and armaments. Expect to receive this information as an appendix to this document.

## **Relevant Factions**

As you already know, there are five other factions involved in our civil war. Understand their motivations and the extent of their current involvement. Be careful about immediately dismissing any of these groups as total enemies, however. While we will inevitably have conflicts of interests with other nations, immediately alienating other nations will lead to lost opportunities and unnecessary escalations. The obvious exception to this rule is the governing body of the Houthi Rebels, the Supreme Political Council.

## **Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia**

As it stands, the armed forces of Saudi Arabia stands to be one of our closest allies. They have historically backed south Yemen both economically, and during its second civil war, and have little to gain from Houthi victory. That said, their support - if secured - would not be rooted

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<sup>60</sup>Nadav Pollac and Henry Knights, *Gulf Coalition Operations in Yemen - Part 3 - Maritime and Aerial Blockade*, (Washington Institutue: 2016).  
<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/gulf-coalition-operations-in-yemen-part-3-maritime-and-aerial-blockade>

out of any sense of kinship or affection, it would be an exercise in pragmatism. Any actions we take that challenge this perception could jeopardize potential support, a risk we simply cannot afford unless our armed forces can gain operational independence.

Saudi Arabia's hatred for Iran cannot be overstated. While Iran is currently hostile towards the Hadi Government, any attempt at rapprochement or reconciliation with the Iranians will inevitably anger the Saudis.

## **US CENTCOM**

The United States has been a partner of Yemen in the past, providing arms deals, training, and foreign aid in exchange for our cooperation with their "War on Terror." While a long string of counterterror blunders and lackadaisical leadership from President Saleh have strained our relationship with the Americans, the realities of Yemen's civil war have made it hard for them to work against us. Much like the Saudis, Iran's involvement with the Houthis may very well force the Americans into our corner.

That said, the United States is a fickle nation. Unlike the other parties in this conflict, the Americans are far more vulnerable to political pressure from their own citizens. If our actions stoke the ire of the American public, their government could be forced to act against us.

## **Supreme Political Council**

Also known as the Houthi Rebels, this is the group that considers themselves the rightful rulers of Yemen. As long as they maintain this claim, this faction represents an existential threat and must either be destroyed or brought into our fold. They enjoy the backing of Iran and Yemen's northern Salafist tribes.

## **Iranian Armed Forces**

The primary supporters of the Houthi Rebels, the Iranian military has been arming and training the Houthis, and various other militia groups opposed to the Hadi Government. The Iranians are supporting the Houthis in the hopes of establishing a pro-Iranian government in Yemen, and will likely support any group that helps them pursue this goal.

As previously mentioned, any attempt at rapprochement or diplomacy with the Iranians will greatly anger the Saudis. We will have very little diplomatic autonomy if we continue to rely on Saudi support.

## **Union Defense Forces**

The armed forces of the UAE historically have been friendly to south Yemen, but unlikely to immediately side with the Hadi government. Their role in this conflict is one of self-interest and pragmatism, and they are likely to side with whichever faction makes an early display of strength. While they will be less predictable than other factions in the coming months, they will not be less important. The UAE has no shortage of resources, and their economic and military support could prove to be quite beneficial.

## **Other Noteworthy Groups**

A large number of other groups have established their presence in Yemen. Many of these groups are opportunistic and openly hostile to the other participants in Yemen's civil war.

Others may be more open to negotiation and alliances. Be aware the interests of these groups, and proceed carefully if we encounter them in the field. While these groups may be smaller than the other participants in our civil war, they will still be potentially dangerous. Some of these groups may only have a presence in particular regions, others may be more widespread.

## **Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP)**

An affiliate of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, AQAP has exploited Yemen's civil war to make significant territorial gains in the East and challenge government authority<sup>61</sup>. While the group has mostly used Yemen as a staging area for attacks against the West and its allies, AQAP has emerged as a power that is both well-versed in local customs, and incredibly unfriendly towards the Hadis and the Houthis. They have been very successful at recruiting Yemenis, and have little reservation with attacking anyone who challenges their operations, or their aspiration to form a caliphate out of their territorial holdings in Yemen.

Note that numerous terror attacks against Saudi Arabia have originated from AQAP's holdings in Yemen. A concentrated attack against AQAP may be a good way of securing early Saudi support. Conversely, allowing them to operate unhindered will likely anger the Saudis, and many others.

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<sup>61</sup> *Yemen's Al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base*, (International Crisis Group: 2017).

## **The Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL)**

By now, the Islamic State's reputation should precede it. The group has killed scores of people across the Middle East, and has become an object of anxiety for the rest of the civilized world. Unfortunately for us, the group has an established presence in Yemen's eastern reaches. ISIL has carried out numerous terror attacks against Yemeni civilians, including car bomb attacks in Aden<sup>62</sup>, suicide attacks against military bases<sup>63</sup>, and a number of assaults against mosques across the country<sup>64</sup>. The Islamic State will continue to launch attacks so long as they are allowed to operate in Yemen. Neutralizing them - or at least minimizing their influence - should be a top priority.

## **Hezbollah**

Hezbollah is a militia that took root in Lebanon, and has participated in numerous Middle Eastern conflicts - much to the ire of the Gulf states that used to support it<sup>65</sup>. The extent of Hezbollah's involvement is unclear at the moment, but it appears that they have been fighting in support of the Houthis<sup>66</sup>. Hezbollah's support of the Houthis is to be expected, the group has expressed sympathies for the Zaydi sect of Islam in Yemen, and has often acted as a proxy for Iranian interests across the Middle East<sup>67</sup>. At the moment, Hezbollah does not present the same severe threat posed by the Islamic State or AQAP, but they could become a significant obstacle if left unopposed.

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<sup>62</sup> *Scores killed in ISIL-claimed suicide bombing in Yemen*, (Al-Jazeera News:2016).

<sup>63</sup> *ISIL Claims suicide attack in Aden*, (Al-Jazeera News: 2016).

<sup>64</sup> Shuaib Almosawa, Kareem Fahim and Eric Schmitt, *Islamic State gains strength in Yemen, Challenging Al-Qaeda* (The New York Times: 2015)

<sup>65</sup> Hilterman and Alley, *The Houthis are Not Hezbollah*, (Foreign Policy: 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Reuters Staff, *Yemeni Government says Hezbollah fighting alongside Houthis*, (Reuters: 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Ghazanfar Ali Khan, *Pentagon Chief Warns of Yemen "Hezbollah"*, (ArabNews: 2017).

## **Questions to Consider:**

- 1: How quickly can Yemen's military be strengthened?
- 2: How much foreign aid and support are you willing to rely on?
- 3: How legitimate do you think Houthi grievances are? Do you believe there is room for diplomacy?
- 4: How do you plan on securing military victory while also laying the economic and political framework Yemen needs to thrive?
- 5: Which regions will be the most strategically important? Which ones are you willing to abandon if necessary?
- 6: Can military victory be secured without creating humanitarian concerns?
- 7: Consider the implications of closer relations with Saudi Arabia. Given their history of interfering in the affairs of other nations, can they be trusted?
- 8: Does American involvement in Yemen's civil war present a danger, or an opportunity?
- 9: What are some nonmilitary means of making Hadi territories safer and more prosperous?
- 10: How do you intend on handling the threat posed by ISIL, AQAP, and Hezbollah?

## **Research Guide:**

The Yemen Civil War is an ongoing conflict, so there is very little settled, authoritative research about it. Instead, I recommend you develop an understanding of Yemen's culture, and see *how* the civil war is being fought. Understanding Yemen's culture will help you craft more effective directives, and understanding the civil war will help you emulate successes and avoid mistakes that have already been made.

To this end, here are a list of excellent websites and news outlets to help you with your research:

- The CIA World Factbook
- Reuters News
- Al-Jazeera News
- War on the Rocks (search "Yemen" to find pertinent articles)
- The International Crisis Group

We look forward to meeting you all on grounds. This will be a challenging committee, but we know you will all rise to the challenge.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Mortensen

Devansh Agarwal.

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